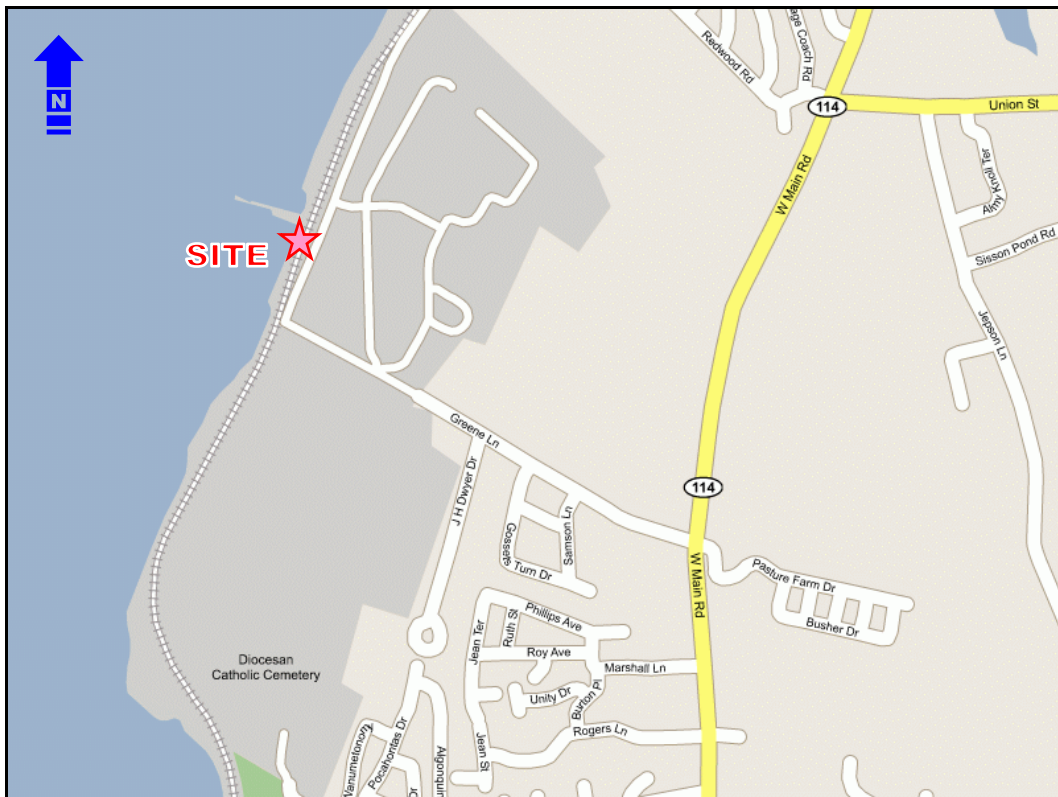


Site No. 11

BURMA ROAD MIDDLETOWN

Middletown
Burma Road



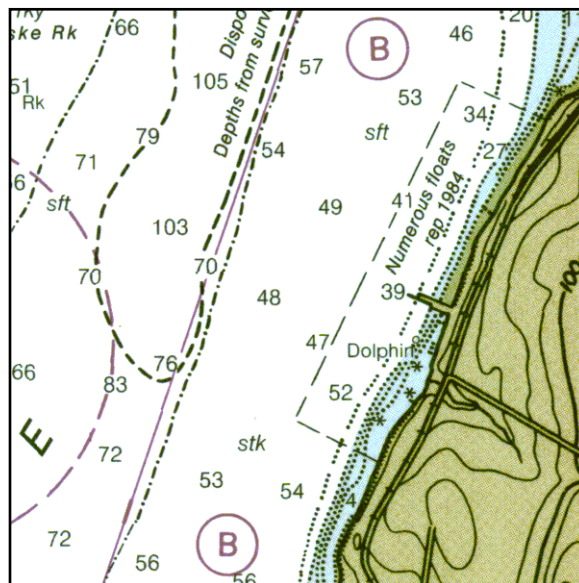
BURMA ROAD MIDDLETOWN

Site Description

The Burma Road Middletown site is located along the westerly shore of Aquidneck Island near the intersection of Burma Road and Greene Lane. Fishing is currently conducted from the remains of the former Midway Pier, which consists of an abandoned concrete/earthen structure extending approximately 250 feet from the shoreline into the East Passage. Parking is provided by a vast, unimproved gravel lot which runs along Burma Road, the northernmost portion of which is undergoing site remediation to remove soils which were contaminated from past use of the site. Currently part of the U.S. Naval Reservation (Naval Station Newport), this federally-owned parcel is also located within the planning area of *West Side Master Plan* recently developed by Aquidneck Island Planning Commission.

Location Assessment

Bay Location. Located along the Upper East Passage across from Jamestown, bay uses in the vicinity of the site consist primarily of recreational boating and sailing. The main channel of the East Passage is offset approximately 3,000 feet from shore at this location, and water depths near the shoreline are relatively deep in this area (see nautical chart image). A few hundred feet northwest of the abandoned pier, a CRMC-permitted shellfish aquaculture area is delineated by a buoy line (see Photo 6). Approximately 2.5 miles north along this coastline, the Melville harbor area is host to commercial and recreational marina uses. Coddington Cove supports active navy uses approximately 2 miles south of the site.



Waters in the vicinity of this site were assessed as fully meeting aquatic life support criteria. These waters are open to shellfishing and have been assigned a water quality goal of SA (high quality) by the RIDEM (see Appendix B). From the Online Recreational Fishing Survey, common catch in the vicinity of the site consists of Striped Bass and Bluefish (spring - fall), with Tautog and Scup also reported in lesser numbers during the summer. Anglers interviewed at the site found the fishing to be excellent at this location.

Land Location. As previously noted, the site is part of Naval Station Newport, which extends from Newport proper north into Middletown and Portsmouth and is the dominant land use along the East Passage coastline. A large tract of navy housing is located immediately east of this site, accessible by both Burma Road and Greene Lane (see aerial photo, locus map). Approximately 1 mile east of the site State Route 114 (West Main Road) runs parallel to Burma Road, supporting primarily farmland and residential uses (including navy housing) along this stretch.

Midway Pier is centrally located on Aquidneck Island, approximately a 15 minute drive from downtown Newport. As the terrain along the shoreline at this location drops sharply, the

elevation of the Burma Road lot offers an excellent scenic overlook of Narragansett Bay (see Photo 2) and the Newport Bridge to the southwest. The Old Colony & Newport Scenic Railroad runs adjacent to Burma Road at this location (Photos 2, 8), though its use is presently limited to entertainment ventures (dinner and sightseeing trains). This stretch of Burma Road is also signed as a bike route.

The Burma Road / Midway Pier site is also located within the planning area of *West Side Master Plan* recently developed by Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC). The AIPC is a quasi-governmental, joint municipal planning commission created to “serve as a forum for communication, coordination and consensus building among Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, and Naval Station Newport, as well as the state of Rhode Island and other civic, state and federal organizations.” Issued in November 2005, the *West Side Master Plan* presents a comprehensive vision for future land and shoreline use along the west side of Aquidneck Island. Within this document, the Burma Road site was identified for the potential development of public recreation and shoreline access, including a fishing area at the former Midway Pier. Excerpts of the Plan pertaining to the Burma Road site are provided following the photographs in this section (Pages 5-10 and 5-12, used by permission of the AIPC). The *West Side Master Plan* may be viewed in its entirety at the AIPC website (<http://www.aquidneckplanning.org>).

Environmental Constraints and Permitting. The coastal feature of this site consists of the abandoned pier structure, which is characterized by large rip rap armor stone along both sides. The shoreline to the south of this structure also appears to have been similarly provided with armor stone for stabilization. Coastal waters at this location are classified as Type 4 (Multipurpose) by the CRMC, and areas of eelgrass may also be within the vicinity of the project. Rehabilitation of the abandoned pier with no changes to the existing footprint would likely qualify as a Category A application.

Facilities Assessment

Fishing at this shoreline site is currently concentrated along the remains of the Midway Pier, an abandoned earthen/concrete pier extending approximately 250 feet from the shoreline. This structure is the remains of a larger naval docking facility, as evidenced by concrete ruins at its end and the depiction of a “T” wharf at this location on the Middletown tax assessor map. The pier is accessed by crossing the railroad tracks (via the deteriorated bituminous road which previously serviced the pier) and bypassing the chain-link gate via a narrow footpath to its right (see Photo 4). In its dormancy, this structure has also become quite overgrown with vegetation (Photo 5). While currently offering good access to the relatively deep waters at this location, the overall accessibility of the pier is limited, and footing can be somewhat precarious along the perimeter from which fishing is conducted. The aesthetic quality of the site is currently marred by moderate amount of litter is strewn amongst the rip rap (Photo 9).

Previously supporting naval use of the abandoned pier, the landside dirt/gravel lot along Burma Road does not appear to have been maintained for quite some time (Photo 1). In addition to providing parking for fishing uses, visitors were observed to park at the site simply to take in excellent views offered by this location. This lot currently provides ample capacity for both purposes with no posted restrictions to its use.

The northernmost portion of the lot (directly upland from the abandoned pier) is currently cordoned off for soil remediation work due to contamination from previous use of the site (Photo 3). The orange snow fence has since been replaced with temporary chain link fence prohibiting access to this area. The Environmental Department of Naval Station Newport indicated that this

was the former site of “Building 70”, which served as a booster pump house for the heating and pumping of oil between upland tank farms and former piers at this location. Several underground tanks and sumps were found upon the demolition of the building in 1999, and a subsequent site investigation revealed soil contamination in this area. Remediation of the site (including the complete removal of contaminated soils) is expected to be complete by early 2006. The entire Burma Road site is no longer actively used by the Navy, and the Naval Station currently has no plans for future development of this parcel.

Existing Site Conditions

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
<i>Existing Fishing Facilities</i>		X		
<i>Parking</i>			X	
<i>Compatibility with Surrounding Land / Water Uses</i>			X	
<i>Statewide Transportation Accessibility / Public Transit</i>		X		
<i>Site Aesthetics</i>		X		
	Low	Medium	High	
<i>Water Quality (see Appendix B)</i>			X	

Priority for Capital Improvements: **High**

The Burma Road Middletown site, while largely unimproved, appears to offer a good “blank slate” for the potential development of a moderately-sized recreational fishing facility. In addition to the excellent fishing at this location, it appears that the abandoned pier could be rehabilitated and possibly extended by floating dock or fixed pier structure. While additional engineering investigations would be necessary to determine the feasibility (and cost) of these measures, a potential fishing structure would not need to be long (given the relatively deep waters along this shoreline) and could possibly incorporate a “T” or “L” configuration to maximize frontage for fishing. The large open lot which comprises the upland portion of the site also appears well-suited for the development of parking facilities, landscaping improvements, and appropriate amenities. The overall cost for development of such a recreational facility at this location (including pier rehabilitation/extension, parking, etc.) would be high.

Developed by the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission with the direct participation of the Island’s municipalities (Portsmouth, Middletown, Newport) and the Naval Station Newport, the *West Side Master Plan* is comprehensive planning document comprising a shared vision of the future of the West Side of Aquidneck Island. As part of this plan, the subject shoreline location has been identified for the potential development of public fishing access (see attached excerpts). Though currently controlled by the U.S. Navy, this vacant site parcel is one of several properties that may be divested by the Navy in the future as a result of an ongoing military Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process or other forms of land disposition. Given that the Burma Road site both (a) appears well-suited based on the investigations conducted for this study and (b) has the endorsement of the AIPC and its constituents, it is

highly recommended that the State coordinate with the AIPC and Naval Station Newport to further investigate the potential development of recreational fishing facilities at this location.



Photo 1. Burma Road lot looking north from southerly end.



Photo 2. Looking northwest to pier ruins from lot / railroad tracks.



Photo 3. Soil remediation area at northerly end of lot (closest to abandoned pier).



Photo 4. Entrance to the abandoned Midway Pier. The gate is bypassed via a footpath to its right.



Photo 5. Path down to fishing spots at the end of Midway Pier.



Photo 6. Fishing at end of pier looking northwest. Buoys in the background delineate an aquaculture area.



Photo 7. Evening fishing at the Burma Road site.



Photo 8 (left). Newport Dinner Train passing through site.
Photo 9 (right). Typical litter condition along sides of abandoned pier.



View south of Greene Lane unpaved parking area along the Newport Secondary

in 1993. Located in Bristol, abutting Portsmouth, Route 114 (Hope Street and Ferry Road) and High Street comprise a five-mile scenic roadway designated in 2000.

Protection of scenic roads and vistas can be accomplished through mechanisms described in the *Implementation* section (*Tools for Establishing Scenic Roads and Protecting Vistas*, p. 6-16).

Identification of Opportunities for Expanded Recreation

According to a 1999 Newport County Convention and Visitors Bureau survey, sixty percent of the visitors cited recreation as one of their primary reasons for coming to the Newport Area. Twenty-three percent said they visited the Newport region to see and experience its unique historic architecture. While there are quite a few indoor and outdoor recreational sites on Aquidneck Island, the West Side has a relatively small proportion of them. There is, however, a good potential for developing West Side recreational sites for use by residents and visitors. The following section describes some areas that can be developed in the near term as recreational open space with good public access facilities.

Greene Lane Park - Scenic Vista and Fishing Area

The Midway Pier area has the potential for development as a scenic overlook on Burma Road (future Shoreline Drive) near Greene Lane. This Navy property is currently an unpaved parking lot between Burma Road (Defense Highway) and the Newport Secondary rail line. Both the rail and the road are at the same elevation with a slight drop to a maintained grass strip and vegetat-

ed buffer along the cobble shoreline. The area provides scenic vistas of the Bay, Pell Bridge, and Islands and could be developed as a public picnic area, scenic outlook, shoreline trailhead to a scenic overlook at McAllister Point, access to a fishing pier, and as a destination on the Blue Trail. The area also provides access to the scenic rail bridge over Gomes Brook and a connection to the Burma Road bike lane. A fishing pier could be developed at the former Midway Pier abutment with interpretive panels about Navy history, mussel aquaculture and bay ecology. This park could also provide access to the shoreline for walking, wading, and possibly swimming. This site should include parking (thirty to forty spaces) for four-season enjoyment of the views across the bay, Pell Bridge, islands, and boat traffic.

Picnic tables, bicycle racks, and a pedestrian trail would provide a recreational resource for residents of the Town of Middletown (currently there is no public access to the Narragansett Bay shoreline), tourists and Shoreline Drive motorists (see *Figure 5-3, Greene Lane Shoreline Access*, p. 5-12). The trail could cross the tracks to the proposed Newport Secondary bike path, descend to the shore, and continue along the shore to a scenic outlook at McAllister Point. This park would be a key attraction along the upgraded Shoreline Drive and would serve as a node for the bike path, a shoreline trail, and a Blue Trail for kayaks and other small boats. The Navy Greene Lane convenience store would be popular with many cyclists, walkers and boaters.

Heritage Corridor

The West Side project area is a local link in the Newport to Bristol Heritage

Views, Heritage...and Getting to the Bay

Recreational open space should be expanded with the goals of accenting scenic vistas, supporting the heritage corridor, and achieving greater waterfront access.

access with vistas of Narragansett Bay, Prudence Island and the scenic arch railroad bridge over Lawton Brook. Access from the Melville Ponds' newly marked Red Trail would connect with a shoreline trail (no parking or vehicular access is envisioned at this time).

The cobble waterfront at the end of Cory's Lane in Portsmouth is currently undeveloped, although an unpaved area is available for parking one or two cars. Parking for up to five cars could be considered at the end of Cory's

Lane. A stone foundation located near the Cory's Lane access area provides a link to past use of the site and thus an opportunity for interpretation.

A marina proposed by Carnegie Abbey at the end of Willow Lane in Portsmouth would provide public parking for approximately twenty trailers.

A Blue Trail with put-in places and shoreline stops for kayakers and other small boats would provide access and destinations. Blue Trail destinations, indicated in *Figure 5-2, Conservation*

Recommendations (p. 5-6) include Perrotti Park and piers along the Point neighborhood, Rose Island, and the Stone Pier north of Pell Bridge in Newport, Greene Lane in Middletown, and Weaver Cove boat ramp, Dyer Island, Cory's Lane, and Willow Lane in Portsmouth. Put-in locations for car-top boats could include Greene Lane in Middletown, and Cory's Lane in Portsmouth. Put-ins currently are located at Elm Street in Newport and Weaver Cove in Portsmouth. Public access is included as part of the CRMC application for a marina at Willow Lane in Portsmouth.

Greene Lane Shoreline Access Figure 5-3

